



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

December 10, 2004

The Honorable Gale A. Norton
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Room 7214
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Madam Secretary:

Thank you for upholding your commitment to the State of Florida to not open the moratoria areas off of Florida's coast, aside from the reduced Lease Sale 181 area, to leasing activities in the 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Plan for 2002-2007. As you prepare the next 5-Year Plan for 2007-2012, I request that you extend your commitment to protecting those moratoria areas off of Florida and the other coastal areas in your 5-Year Plan for 2007-2012. A quick, knee-jerk response to volatile energy markets may not best serve our country's long-term objectives: decreasing foreign imports and increasing alternative energy sources.

As you know, the prohibition against natural gas and oil drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) moratoria areas have been a national priority for more than 20 years. This has allowed Florida and other coastal states' marine and coastal environments to thrive and support impressive recreational and commercial fisheries, as well as diving, boating and other pursuits enjoyed by millions of Floridians and visitors to our coasts. Florida's delegation has been a major part of the broad bipartisan commitment to keep most of our waters free of further exploration and exploitation. I believe that the moratoria can continue while addressing our country's energy needs.

A recent report by the National Commission on Energy Policy, a bipartisan group of top energy experts from industry, government, labor, academia and environmental and consumer groups recommended several ways to increase the natural gas supply, but none of those recommendations included opening up

moratoria areas to exploration. Many of the recommendations from the report for increasing the natural gas supply should become part of the public debate, including providing incentives for the construction of an Alaska natural gas pipeline, addressing hurdles to the siting and construction of liquefied natural gas terminals and increasing resources for public land agencies to improve planning and permitting processes to promote more efficient resource extraction while maintaining environmental protections. Increasing consumer conservation, reducing the risk of climate change, augmenting our renewable resources and energy efficiency also should become part of the public debate on the future of our country's energy policy.

I stand ready to assist in you in finding forward-thinking, technologically innovative and environmentally reasonable solutions to our country's energy demands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.